

# KYP

## KEEPING YOU POSTED

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THURSDAY  
Headline news for busy  
church editors

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Here is the Good News of the United Church of Christ, especially edited for congregational publications, with topical news of the wider church, helpful hints to strengthen members' faith and pride in the denomination and personal testimonies to stir the spirit. Each story is short and complete and can stand alone, ready to drop into the weekly bulletin or the monthly newsletter. The code at the end of some entries refers interested readers to a more comprehensive story in *United Church News*.

**RUN FOR (OTHERS') SUPPER –** Why was the UCC's Hunger Action Office suddenly getting all those checks for \$26.20? Folks around the country were pledging a dollar a mile that Susan Sanders, who heads the volunteer service program for the United Church Board for Homeland Ministries, would finish the 26-mile, 385-yard Long Beach (Calif.) Marathon. She did and the hunger action fund was richer by \$2,212.46. And what was she thinking about during the race? A Ben & Jerry's fudge sundae.

**DO UNTO OTHERS –** When St. John UCC, Valmeyer, Ill., was totalled by the 1993 Midwestern floods, it received funds from the UCC to rebuild. When the Congregational Church of Chatsworth (Calif.) UCC was devastated by an earthquake in 1994, pastor Jeff Utter was surprised and pleased to receive a \$300 check from St. John. Now, the Chatsworth church has raised \$520 to send to churches destroyed by the 1995 earthquake in Kobe, Japan.

**AIN'T NO WAY TO MAKE A LIVING –** Congress and many states are pushing hard to put able-bodied welfare recipients back to work. But many unskilled jobs, like flipping hamburgers, pay the minimum wage of \$4.25 an hour, not enough to live on in today's world. That's one reason President Clinton wants to raise the rate to \$5.15. The UCC's Office for Church in Society thinks it's a good idea, too. "This is good news for the working poor," says executive director Valerie Russell.

**CREATIVE INVESTMENTS –** The UCC now sets aside a certain percentage of its investment funds for what some in the investment community call creative investing, in which socially responsible investment is considered in addition to financial return. That generally means investments with groups involved in homelessness and housing and other social and economic development projects.

The 1989 General Synod recommended the program with the hope that starting in 1990 all investment units, from the local church to the national agencies, would set aside 1 percent of their assets annually for creative investments until they reached 10 percent. By the end of 1994, the four national agencies with investment portfolios had exceeded all expectations.

The United Church Board for Homeland Ministries has reached 9.7 percent; the United Church Board for World Ministries, 4.8 percent; the Pension Boards, 7.8 percent; and United Church Foundation (which invests for local churches, conferences and national agencies), 7.4 percent.

The national agencies continue their long-standing practice of making prudent investments within the objectives of each agency.

**PLANT A TREE FOR LIFE –** Inner city children in St. Louis are planting trees in remembrance of youngsters killed by random acts of violence. The annual Arbor Day ceremony is the inspiration of the Dolphin Defenders, a group of 9- to 12-year-olds from United Church Neighborhood Homes who are concerned about both the environment and social issues. They have their work cut out for them. Nationally, 100,000 students bring guns to school every day, according to the *Journal of the American Medical Association and Health Affairs*, while each day 14 students are killed by guns. The Dolphin Defenders have added a second planting day and hope someday their trees will celebrate the absence of violence.



**FROM DESPAIR TO HOPE** – A record number of UCC churches in 1994 extended a helping hand to refugees. According to the UC Board for World Ministries, 144 local congregations became either sponsors or provided financial and material support. The World Board's refugee resettlement program brought to the United States last year 1,059 refugees from Cuba, Vietnam, Ukraine, Bosnia, Haiti, Rwanda, Zaire, Kurdistan, Moldavia, Sudan, Uzbekistan, Albania, Afghanistan, Iran, Iraq, Liberia, Mozambique and Somalia.

One of those first-time sponsors is **First Congregational UCC, Bellingham, Wash.**, which welcomed not one but two Bosnian families. The war in Bosnia "is one of those great human tragedies in which we feel powerless," says First Church pastor Donel McCellan. Sponsoring a family "is a way to intervene in a very small way."

The denomination has been working since 1946 with Church World Service to settle refugees.

**UNDIE SUNDAY** – Give a coat or a sweater to a homeless person shivering on a cold winter's day? Yes, of course, says Marjorie Royle of **First Congregational UCC, Verona, N.J.** But underwear is also important and rarely considered. So she initiated Undie Sunday to collect underwear and socks.

Now, that's an undercover mission project.

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**COMING SOON TO A COMPUTER NEAR YOU** – Religious news and views are about to take a gigantic leap into cyberspace, thanks to the pioneering work of UCC minister George Conklin. In a design he developed called Global Ecumenical Network, GEN, Conklin proposes to make religious news and denominational information available to a worldwide audience over the Internet, the global electronic superhighway.

One popular feature is cross indexing of information. A newspaper reporter, for example, who wants to know what UCC bodies have said about justice and peace can find out at the touch of a button. Or a local church pastor checking religious attitudes about suicide can sample worldwide thinking or what's happening in the neighborhood. Conklin, a Berkeley, Calif., media consultant, developed GEN for the National Council of Churches, but its application is for all faith groups.

**THE SWIMMING LESSON** – "Patience is one thing I have never had a lot of," confesses Emma Petrie, an ebullient 16-year-old teenager from the Cleveland suburb of Lakewood, Ohio. "I'm always in a hurry and have trouble with slow things or people," she admits.

Then she met Bob. He is a resident of **Emmaus Home**, a UCC facility in Marthasville, Mo., for those with mental and physical disabilities. Emma and friends came to town on a youth mission project from their home church, **Lakewood Congregational UCC**. Bob, an older man, was afraid of water and had never learned to swim. Emma and her friend, Jenny, coaxed Bob to wade into ankle deep water, where he promptly sat down. With gentle prompting and support, they persuaded him to stretch out and float on his back. A little more coaching and he was kicking his feet. Then they turned him over, getting him to move arms and legs. Soon, Bob understood how to kick a little on his own and suddenly, he was swimming. The two girls encouraged him to paddle back and forth between the two safety ropes, some 25 yards.

"For 40 minutes, I changed Bob's life," Emma remembers. "I taught him. That felt great, to know I was part of something."

**THANKS TO PIZZA HUT AND SPRITE** – The UCC Coalition for Gay/Lesbian Concerns would like church members to write to their local NBC television stations and national advertisers on the network. Not to protest but to praise. The praise is for the made-for-TV movie, "Serving in Silence," the true story of a much decorated Navy nurse who was drummed out of the service after she disclosed she was a lesbian. Glenn Close had the lead.

"We want to congratulate NBC for this timely and sensitive story," says Jan Griesinger of the UCC coalition.

Some of the national sponsors are Kraft, Pillsbury, Ethan Allen, Sprite, Revlon, Toyota, Pizza Hut, AT&T and Whirlpool.